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Anoka County receives national Hunger Champions Award

Minnesota Department of Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson today presented the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services Outreach Coalition 2011 Hunger Champions Award to Anoka County Human Services Economic Assistance staff at the Nutritious Food Coalition meeting, at which Anoka County presented information on best practices in ensuring Minnesotans get the nutritious food they need via the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The USDA recently announced the Gold, Silver or Bronze 2011 Hunger Champions Award winners for exceptional customer services to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants. Anoka County and 81 other organizations throughout the country received the awards.

“Putting healthy food within reach for low-income Americans is a top priority at USDA,” said USDA Food and Nutrition Service Midwest Regional Administrator Ollice Holden. “We commend Anoka County Human Services for going above and beyond in its efforts to ensure low-income Americans have access to the nutrition benefits of SNAP.”

[Anoka County Human Services](#) and the other award winners employed strategies to ease and expedite the application process, improve public awareness, reach underserved groups, and educate participants about healthy eating.

The USDA award letter to Anoka states, “The Outreach Coalition and the SNAP Hunger Champions committee publicly salute your service to your community... .” The award reads: “In recognition of your outstanding efforts to provide exemplary customer service and outreach services in support of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).”

Currently more than 500,000 Minnesotans receive SNAP benefits each month. Through the Nutritious Food Coalition, a public-private partnership to increase participation in the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Minnesota Department of Human Services is working with counties, tribes, community, nonprofit and business partners to increase SNAP participation rates in the state. Currently, only 65 percent of eligible Minnesotans and 44 percent—a recent 3 percent increase—of eligible seniors, age 60 and over, receive these benefits.

“We believe we know the reasons why people don’t participate,” said Commissioner Lucinda Jesson. “Stigma, accessibility problems, and unfamiliarity with the process and eligibility requirements all play a part in this. Anoka County Human Services is a fine example of an agency that has worked hard to overcome these obstacles to ensure those eligible for the program have access to it. Our department recognizes this and so does the USDA. We extend our congratulations to Anoka County Human Services for its good work on behalf of those most in need of nutritious food.”

More information is available on the Food and Nutrition Services [website](#) or Minnesota Department of Human Services [website](#).

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This information also is available on the DHS website: <http://mn.gov/dhs/>.